

## CHILDREN

The greatest blessing in a Christian marriage is children. From the day He created us, God intended for men and women to marry and have children. His command was that we "*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*" (Gen. 1:28). The only reason that God created the two sexes and instituted marriage is so that children could be brought forth and mankind could increase.

Childhood is the time when we learn most of what we will ever know. It is the time when we learn to respect and obey authority. This begins with our parents, and then slowly extends to other adults in the family, babysitters, teachers, police officers, etc. Hopefully, we also begin to learn the respect and fear of God at this time.

Paul's instructions to children are simple and to the point. "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Eph. 6:1-4). Children are not expected to have an extensive knowledge of the scriptures or of what is right and wrong. Most of what they know they will have learned from their parents. Paul simply enjoins children to obey the instructions of their parents. As we grow older and are more capable of discerning right from wrong and of studying the Bible for ourselves, we become more accountable for directing the course of our lives according to God's will.

Honoring one's father and mother includes more than just obeying them during childhood – much more. Even as adults, we should respect the experience and wisdom our parents have and give heed to their advice. As our parents age, they often reach the stage in life where they require our assistance. The ultimate dishonor to our parents is putting them away in a nursing home when we had the capacity to care for them ourselves but did not want to be inconvenienced. How often have we seen the elderly, who were still sharp of mind, waste away so quickly when they were placed in a home by children too busy to care for them? Is it indeed our responsibility to do everything

within our power to care for our aging parents?

Paul said that the Church is chargeable to "*Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God*" (I Tim. 5:3-4). Paul said it is our duty to care for our parents as they once cared for us. Four verses later, he emphasizes the importance of doing this by saying: "*But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*" (I Tim. 5:8). The world may forsake their own, but a Christian stands out by always taking care of family.

Earlier, we read where Paul referred to the first commandment with promise. This refers to Exodus 20:12, which states: "*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*" I have often heard preachers address children during a sermon and tell them that if they obey their parents, God has promised them a long life. Unfortunately, that is not what Paul said. After mentioning the obedience of children, Paul mentions this promise for honoring parents. We obey as children, but we honor as children and as adults. We start with the assumption that the parents are righteous and deserving of full honor. We honor our parents by not only taking care of them if needed, but also by following in their ways. The original promise was made to the Jews which indicated that as long as each generation continued to follow in their parents' ways (following God) that they would have peace, prosperity, and long life. The same principle holds true today. I do not believe that God necessarily protects us and guarantees us long life for honoring our parents, but that this is usually a natural consequence. Those who live quiet holy lives are not likely to be part of things that so often bring about untimely death.

Let us now shift gears and consider the place of children in the family and in the Church. As much as women are to be in submission to men, children are even more so in subjection to adults, especially their parents. Childhood is the time when we should learn patience, humility, concern for others, and many similarly important traits. Especially in today's culture of instant gratification and 'me first,' it is imperative that we are careful about the

lessons we teach our children.

I can remember going to family reunions as a child and always being in line behind the adults. I never liked it, but as I matured I began to understand that was my place and that I needed to show respect for adults. That is a lesson that today's generation misses, because in most cases children are put at the front of the line. When do we teach children to be submissive? As a school teacher, I can assure you that most never do learn it. If we do not learn it as children, then it will be very hard to learn it as an adult.

Paul instructed fathers to bring up their children "*in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Eph. 6:4). This implies much more than teaching Bible stories. It includes helping the child to understand right from wrong and developing the fortitude to act accordingly. An integral part of this is chastisement or punishment. There are many ways to accomplish this, but one necessary part of every child's upbringing is corporal punishment. I saw a preacher once almost cringe at having to admit the Bible teaches this. The wise man Solomon even said, "*He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes*" (Pro. 13:24). Have you ever heard someone say, "I love my child too much to spank him?" An undisciplined child grows into an undisciplined adult. "*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him*" (Pro. 22:15). If the rod of correction is not used to drive the foolishness away, what does the child become when he is grown? Is he likely to be anything but a fool?

Discipline must be consistent, firm, and fair. It should be done out of love and with the child's best interest in mind. The old saying, "this is going to hurt me more than it will hurt you," may be true on some levels. No one likes to see their child cry, but is not a little pain now worth it, if it helps the child grow into a self-disciplined God-fearing adult?

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## **APOLOGIA**

**QUESTION:** What is meant in I Corinthians 3:15 where it says that if anyone's work is burned he will suffer loss; but he

himself will be saved, yet so as through fire?

As we have noted several times in past articles, in order to understand a verse of scripture, one must consider the context. By context we mean the place of the specific verse in relationship to the verses around it. This is referred to as the immediate context. We also must examine the passage in light of the book in which it is found, as well as in other places in the Bible. This is called the remote context. By following this method of study, one can usually clear up hard-to-understand passages or even see familiar ones in a clearer light. We will look at the verse above in light of its place in I Corinthians.

The epistle to the Corinthians was written by the apostle Paul to answer some questions and to provide guidance to a fledgling congregation. We are sure that the church at Corinth was comprised of those from diverse background each with their own understanding of what it meant to be religious. This would have included Jews as well as Pagans. Of course the differences in background would sometimes precipitate a clash and thus gender questions. This appears to be the main reason for Paul's writing.

One such problem was their improper estimation of preachers. In the first chapter, Paul notes that Christ is the principal figure, not those who led them to Him. Paul tells them that preachers are just servants and should be looked at as such. He then moves to chapter two where he explains that our salvation is in Christ and by means of His crucifixion. The power of salvation is in Him, not in the power of one's speaking ability. He also shows that which was preached was from the Holy Spirit and what He revealed. Thus to become divided or to stir up strife over the messenger was a sign of carnality. Truly spiritual people understand that as disciples of Christ we are all servants, and all of us are responsible for sharing the message of Christ with the lost.

Paul then supports this teaching by demonstrating that it is God who is to be glorified, for all things are of Him. He points out three facts in the text, the last of which deals with the question raised above.

The first thing Paul notes is that it is God who provides for us the opportunity to labor in spreading the Gospel. Paul writes,

*"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?"*  
(I Cor. 3:5)

We must always remember that we are servants of the most High. God is the one who provides the opportunities to serve Him. God is constantly looking for those whose hearts are hungering and thirsting for His truth. If we have prepared ourselves to serve, He will use us to carry out His will. How He uses us may differ. Some will plant and others will water, but all of it is from God.

This brings us to the second point. It does not matter which one we do. Whether we plant or we water, it will always be God who gives the increase.

*"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase."* (I Cor. 3:6-7)

God's word is what is powerful. It will always accomplish its intended purpose especially in regard to the Gospel. The Gospel is powerful because it is a revelation of God's righteousness as well as of His hatred of sin. By His righteousness we mean the manner in which He makes us righteous.

As instruments of God, we have little to do with another's salvation. We may be the instrument God uses (even if we are defective!), but the result depends on the soil. As one put it we are just "seed throwers and water-boys!"

Now we come to the third point which includes the verse under consideration. We have seen that God is the one who is glorified by our service. He provides the opportunity, and He is the one who gives the increase. However, this section also shows that He is the one who rewards those who will prepare themselves to be used by Him in the process.

*"Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor."*  
(I Cor. 3:8)

God will reward those whom he uses according to that which

they will do. In principle the more we sow, the more we will reap. When we build the church by sowing the seed into the hearts of men, we receive great joy over those who obey it. The more we lead to Christ, the more joy we will have. The key is to make sure that we build upon the correct foundation.

*"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 3:9-11)*

Paul portrays the work of preaching the Gospel to that of building a house. It begins with the proper foundation, and then the rest of house is added to it. As it is with a real home, the materials we build with may vary in quality. It might be gold or silver or some inferior material that will burn when a fire is ignited. The comparison is clear. As we preach the Gospel, the souls we reach will in turn contribute to the house we are building (the church). Some people are like gold and will stand the test of time and add great value. Others will be like hay or straw and not stand the test of time at all. The true quality of those we reach will be revealed in time and by judgment.

*"Now if anyone's builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is." (I Cor. 3:12-13)*

We will have great joy if those we have worked with endure to the end. However, there will ultimately be some that will not endure, and consequently we will suffer loss. But the passage is teaching that this does not affect our own salvation. We may suffer loss, but we will still be saved.

*"If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." (I Cor. 3:14-15)*

It may be that we serve many years with little to show like those in the Bible who preached but were not listened to or

were ignored. We will suffer the loss of joy in seeing them converted or seeing them endure. But this does not in any way affect our salvation and the Lord will reward our efforts in laboring on His behalf.

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## **SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES**

and remember last month's questions?

1. After the victory over the Canaanites and Perizzites where the Israelite tribes captured the enemy's leader, Adoni-Bezek, what did they do to him? CUT OFF HIS THUMBS AND BIG TOES (Judges 1:6)
2. After Job mourned the brevity of life, and Eliphaz speaks again, Job addressed his visitors, referring to them as what? MISERABLE COMFORTERS (Job 16:2)
3. According to the book of Jeremiah, whom or what did Jeremiah say the house of Israel looked to as their mothers and fathers? THE TREES AND STONES (Jer. 2:27)
4. About how many swine drowned when Jesus allowed the demons to enter them, causing the swine to run down a hill into the sea? TWO THOUSAND (Mark 5:13)
5. In Paul's letter to the Colossians, what two suggestions did Paul offer regarding speech? OUR SPEECH SHOULD BE TEMPERED WITH GRACE AND SEASONED WITH SALT (Col. 4:6)

## **GOSPEL MEETINGS**

<b><u>DATES</u></b>	<b><u>PLACE</u></b>	<b><u>SPEAKER</u></b>
April 5 - 9	Owens Road Prattville, AL	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
April 5 - 9	Liberty Liberty, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

April 16 – 18	Winchester Winchester, OH	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 16 – 18	Valley Valley, AL	Hunter Bulger (Fort Deposit, AL)
April 16 – 18	Fayetteville Road Fairburn, GA	Kevin Mills (Newnan, GA)
April 18 – 23	West Broad Street Wedowee, AL	Don Avaritt (Conway, AR)
April 19 – 23	Oak Grove Pulaski Co., KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 26 – 30	Chestnut Grove Parksville, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)